

# LONG ISLAND BOTANICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

November - December 1994 Vol. 4, No. 6

## In This Issue

Thomas Allen Stock has written an article about the Spicebush.

Louise Harrison wrote a Conservation Column on the new Biodiversity Act that was passed by New York State. This article will be continued in the next issue.

Eric Lamont has been doing research on the Goldenrods on Long Island. He has found and written about locations of a very rare goldenrod (*Solidago sempervirens* var. *mexicana*).

We will all miss Horst Welzel who passed away on Oct 1, 1994. Horst gave a talk to the society about mushrooms last winter. He also contributed articles about mushrooms to this newsletter.

Next month: Eric Lamont has sent in an article about a rare LI Trillium. We will also publish the second half of Louise Harrison's Biodiversity article.

## PROGRAMS

8 November 1994 - 7:30 pm\*, Al Lindberg, "Reintroduction of Tiger Salamanders at Muttontown Preserve." Muttontown Preserve Nature Center, East Norwich. (For directions to Muttontown Preserve call [516] 571-8500).

13 December 1994 - 7:30 pm\*, Steven Englebright, "Legal & Political issues of the Pine Barrens Preservation Act." Museum of Long Island Natural Sciences, SUNY at Stony Brook. (For directions for MOLINS call [516] 632-8230).

\* Refreshments are available starting at 7:30 pm; the meeting begins at 8 pm.

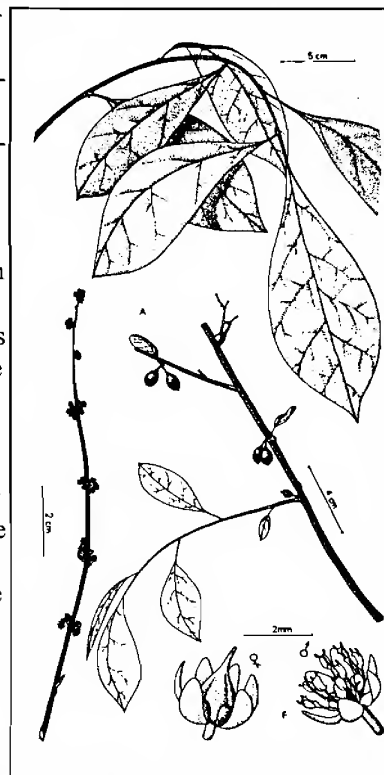
## Spicy Botanical Reading

Botanical literature runs the gamut from very scientific to very artistic. *Lindera benzoin*, spicebush, can be used as an example. In an old edition of Britton & Brown, the spicebush flower is described as "...pedicels about equalling the calyx-segments; anthers oval, minutely emarginate at the summit, ovary about as long as the style." (p. 135)

Compare this with "...Early yellow flowers scent the air attracting early insects" from Steve Brill's fascinating new book *Identifying and Harvesting Edible and Medicinal Plants in Wild and Not So Wild Places* (1994). Brill writes that the pioneers knew the soil would be rich when they saw this plant and settled there to farm. It is facts such as these, ecological facts, that make this book valuable.

It takes a combination of several books and field experiences, however, to "round out" a personal knowledge of a particular species of plant. In Harriet Keeler's 1903 edition of *Our Northern Shrubs*, she bookends spicebush's life cycle by writing "...The spicebush begins and ends its sylvan year in yellow." The tiny blossoms in April are like yellow mist in the lowlands. In late October, the leaves turn the understory yellow again.

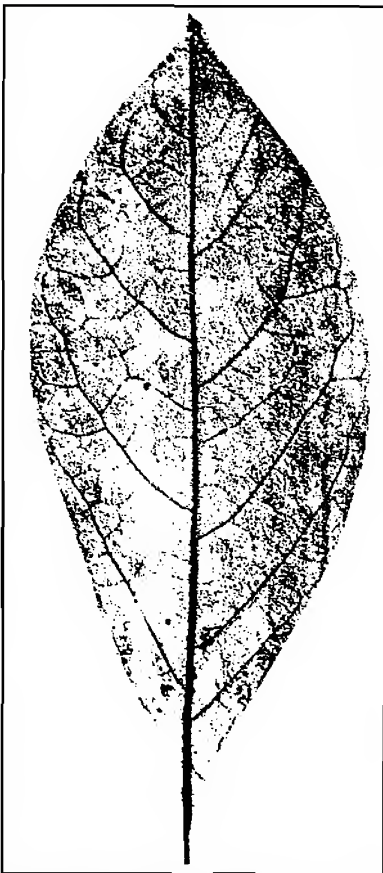
It only took three words to pique my interest from *The*



Spicebush - *Lindera benzoin*

*Book of Medicinal Plants of Eastern/Central North America* by Steven Foster and James Duke. On page 252, the passage on spicebush ends "...Should be investigated." After reading the paragraph, I concluded that spicebush was an entire medicine cabinet! There are at least 21 illnesses that could be treated with this plant including worms, colds, anemia, and colic.

Often I've walked on trails that are graced by this shrub and pulling off a leaf, I crush it and inhale. It's spicy odor is like a botanical after-shave lotion. On August 11, I made this note in my journal: "I picked up drupes from spicebush on the ground along the Nissequogue River at The Sweetbriar Nature Center. I chewed one green seed. It's spicy taste flooded my mouth. I sucked down the odor with an inhalation. Total refreshment!" Lee Peterson in *A Field Guide to Edible Wild Plants* mentions that



"...During the Revolutionary War, its fruit was employed as a substitute for Allspice, and its twigs and leaves brewed into tea." This drupe is one of the first eaten by birds. They must know about the high fat content - 35% lipid.

John Linder, a Swedish physician named it back in the 18th century. The species name is benzoin which refers to the benzene ring, an organic compound found everywhere in the plant. Besides spicebush and allspice, snapweed is another common name. This name comes from the fact that the rubbery, green twigs are one of few that will burn when wet. The twigs pop in a fire probably because of the benzene and moisture inside.

Another common name is *Benjamin bush*, not after a person by that name, but a corruption of the old 1599 chemical term for benzene which was *ben join*. Ann Ramsey, a reference librarian at The New York Botanical Garden in the Bronx, led me to this information.--Thomas Allen Stock

## New York's Biodiversity Act

The trouble with biodiversity is it's so hard to find it a good home nowadays.

In our race to save habitat for the vast array of New York State resident and migratory species, we are slowed by our lagging understanding of individual species and the ecological communities that support them, our lack of information regarding locations of significant populations, and by our failure to coordinate our studies and findings toward a common purpose. Yet now New York has a "home" for investigations of our state's rich natural heritage, the New York State **Biodiversity Research Institute (BRI)**, established by an act of the state legislature last June, and signed into law by Governor Mario Cuomo on June 28, 1993. The BRI is within the New York State Museum, which is part of the State Education Department. The BRI will link and focus research and stewardship efforts to increase protection of New York's biodiversity.

The biodiversity act brings together the activities of state agencies and programs, such as the Department of Environmental Conservation, the Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, the State Museum's Biological Survey, and the New York Natural Heritage Program, under the BRI to assure that critical information will be used by policy makers and in stewardship efforts around the state. The act amended the environmental conservation law, the education law, the parks, recreation and historic preservation law, and the state finance law to set up the BRI. It also clarified and expanded definitions of state "preserves" and "park preserves," and added a new category of "park preserve area" to the protective designations that may be made for state-owned lands. By amending several state laws at once, the act links agencies, research activities, and land stewardship in an integrated approach.

As encapsulated by Assembly member **Steven Englebright**, "What's so exciting about this bill is that it elevates protection of biological diversity to the same level of importance as other public land management considerations--providing for recreation, transportation, and so on--in an expression of state policy backed by solid law." Indeed, the opening line in the legislation reads, "The legislature hereby finds and declares that biodiversity, meaning the total variety of living organisms and the natural processes that support them, is important to the quality of life in New York and throughout the world."

## Origins of the biodiversity act

Introduced in the Assembly by members **Richard Brodsky** and **Englebright**, and cosponsored by members **Brennan, Glick, Gottfried, Grannis, Harenberg, Jacobs, Jenkins, Koppel, Seminerio, and Sidikam** -- and introduced in the Senate by Senator **Owen Johnson** and cosponsored by Senators **Sheffer** and **Pataki** -- the legislation grew from ideas that emerged from two New York Natural History Conferences in 1990 and 1992. These conferences were the first coordinated meetings in the state for scientists and students to discuss biodiversity concerns and issues.

**Norton Miller**, others at the NY State Museum, including **Alan Ray** and **Clifford Siegfried**, **Herb Doig** of DEC, **Tom Lyons** of OPRHP, and legislative staff from Senator Johnson's and Assembly member Brodsky's offices, began to work with **Andy Beers** and his colleagues at The Nature Conservancy to develop a proposal for linking research and stewardship efforts, eventually preparing much of what appears in the final legislation. New York's move to provide a formal, integrated approach to protecting the state's biodiversity parallels ambitious national efforts promoted by President Clinton's administration.

--**Louise Harrison**

Continued next month

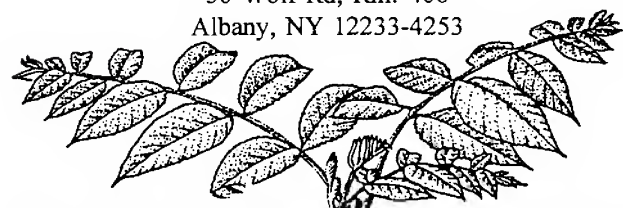
## Butternut Decline

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation is concerned about the drastic decline in Butternut (*Juglans cinerea*) caused by a fungus (*Sirococcus clavigigneti-juglandacearum*). Butternut has declined to a point where the Natural Heritage Programs rank it G3 (globally vulnerable to extinction due to biological factors).

Michael Birmingham is interested in learning the locations of butternut stands. He will then collect samples to locate resistant strains.

If you are interested in helping please call or write describing where butternut stands occur.

Michael Birmingham  
Supervising Forester  
NYS DEC  
50 Wolf Rd, Rm. 406  
Albany, NY 12233-4253



## Rare Goldenrod Rediscovered on LI

In 1753 Carl Linnaeus described a species of goldenrod (*Solidago mexicana*) from the outer coastal plain of eastern North America, occurring from Florida to eastern Texas and Mexico, north to Delaware and locally to southern New York and southeastern Massachusetts. The earliest New York collection of *Solidago mexicana* is from Brooklyn, where it had been collected by Addison Brown in 1877. Historically, the species has been collected only seven times in New York, the most recent Long Island collection is from Sag Harbor where it had been collected by Norman Taylor in 1920.

In 1935 Merritt Lyndon Fernald, the eminent Harvard University botanist, re-evaluated the taxonomic status of *S. mexicana* and recognized it as a variety of *S. sempervirens*. Most current taxonomists accept Fernald's treatment of the complex.

In 1990 I began a herbarium study of the goldenrods of Long Island and noted that *Solidago sempervirens* var. *mexicana* had not been collected in New York in over 45 years and had not been reported from Long Island in 70 years. In 1992, I discovered a population of var. *mexicana* at Flanders in Suffolk County.

An account of this rediscovery has been published in the most recent issue of the *Bulletin of the Torrey Botanical Club*, volume 121, number 3. Complimentary reprints of the publication are available upon request from Eric Lamont, Biology Department, Riverhead High School, Riverhead, NY 11901.--**Eric Lamont**





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# Society News

## Education Committee Award

LIBS displayed its education exhibit at the Planting Fields Fall Flower Show, October 1st through October 11th. The Society was awarded a "Certificate of Excellence" for "Best Educational Exhibit" pictured below. This year the exhibit featured a display of tree cross-sections, accompanied by illustrated handout sheets. Special thanks are extended to **Brian Feil**, director of Bayard Cutting Arboretum, for donating the wood samples. Appreciation is also extended to **Bill** and **Dot Titus** for volunteering many hours staffing the exhibit.--**Mary Laura Lamont**



## September 13 meeting

**Daniel Karpen** showed photos of Trailing Arbutus to a hearing about the West Hills Golf Course. He also stated that Dwarf Ginseng, which is in Shu Swamp, is an indicator of old growth forests. He found a Persimmon Tree on Cuba Hill Rd., Huntington, as well as a Swamp Poplar north of 25A & NYTech, Greenvale.

**John Turner** sent a letter to **Michael Frank**, Deputy Commissioner of Suffolk Parks, saying the previous commissioner had given approval for the memorial plaque for **Joe Beitel**. They acknowledge there has been a precedent for plaques.

**Eric Lamont** reported that at the field trip to Kings Park State Hospital ground, in Nissequogue, led by **Bob Laskowski**, Sat. Sept. 10, Bladder Senna, *Colutea arborescens*, was found.

**Eric Lamont** reported that Calverton Ponds were sprayed for mosquitoes in August, and subsequently he saw dead snakes, bull frogs that could hardly move, a decrease in dragonflies, etc. What was used? **Bruce Lund** said it was Scourge, which is only supposed to

affect tiny insects. **Marilyn Jordan** is pursuing this. **Skip Blanchard** remarked that there are more rare dragonflies in the area than in any other part of Long Island. (Some mosquitoes carried equine encephalitis).

**Dennis Puleston** spoke of taking nuclear powered Russian icebreakers to the North Pole and said they did get trapped for 5 days near Greenland. He then showed wonderful slides of polar ice, birds, native people, sea animals and plants.

## October 11 meeting

**Bob Laskowski** reported Slender-leaved Iris (*Iris prismatica*) at Heckscher Park; Narrow-leaves Sunflower (*Helianthus angustifolia*) at Brown's Rover, Sayville; Amaranth (*Amaranthus cannabinus*) at Brown's River and Nissequogue; and Kudzu at the exit of the Queens Midtown Tunnel in New York City at 34th St. **Eric Lamont** reported Seaside Angelica (*Angelica lucida*) in East Marion, where **Roy Latham** collected it in 1924 (there have been no records of it there since 1924).

**Dave Kunstler** reported Schreber's Aster (*Aster schreberi*) and *Paspalum laeve* in Van Cortlandt Park (The Bronx) and Catnip Giant-hyssop (*Agastache nepatoides*) and Woodland lettuce (*Lactuca floridana*) in Pelham Bay Park (The Bronx). **Daniel Karpen** commented that there was old growth forests in both Van Cortlandt and Pelham Bay Parks. **Dave Kunstler** added that the Pelham forest was mapped in 1885. **Skip Blanchard** found *Carex hormathodes* and *Eleocharis halophila* in the town of Southold and *Solidago sempervirens* var. *mexicana* in Brookhaven.

**Eric Lamont** outlined a project that **Ray Dobbins**, Supt. of Orient SP, has initiated to build a nature trail in the pristine west end of the Park. This is a Red Cedar Maritime Forest in which Red Cedar is the dominant tree. A committee including **Paul Stoutenburgh**, **Mike Schiebel**, **Mike Laspis**, **Eric Lamont** and a few others has been set up to expedite this project. LIBS has been invited to participate and Eric would like the Education Committee to help write a guide. The area has already been designated a National Natural Area. Several names were proposed for this site at the meeting. "The Roy Latham Natural Area" was preferred.

**Eric Lamont** presented a slide show about the life of **Roy Latham**. He described his extensive natural history collections and publications and read from Roy's journals. Roy Latham was presented as one of the greatest of Long Island's naturalists.

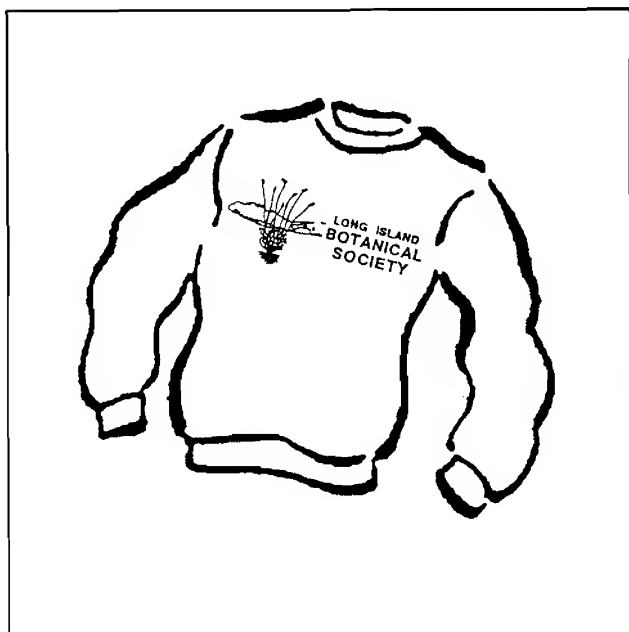
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## *LIBS T-Shirts & Sweatshirts for sale*

Hanes heavy weight T-shirt, 50/50 blend, color is forest, LIBS logo adjacent to the Society's name, sizes L and XL. Price \$10.

Hanes sweatshirt, 50/50 blend, color is natural (off-white) with green lettering, features LIBS logo adjacent to the Society's name, sizes: M and L. Price \$18.

Please call Mary Laura Lamont at (516) 722-5542 to place an order. (Shirts may be picked up at the monthly meetings. For members unable to attend the evening meetings, arrangements can be made to pick up shirts at Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Planting Fields Arboretum, or Riverhead.)



## *Long Island Natural History Exhibit*

**Donald House** will be presenting an exhibit at Briarwood Public Library on Long Island Natural History for the month of April, 1995. Photographs, specimens and any suggestions will be appreciated. All people whose materials will be used will be credited, and all items will be returned after the exhibition. Contact Donald House at (516) 273-7883 ext. 40 during the day and (516) 273-4047 evenings.

## *Executive Board Meeting*

A meeting of the Executive Board will be held on November 22 1994 at 7:15 pm (before the Flora Committee meeting), at Planting Fields Arboretum Library. All members are welcome to attend.

## *Horst Welzel October 1994*

**Horst Welzel**, 61, died suddenly on October 1st. His passing greatly saddened all of us who knew him. A long-time member of the L.I. Botanical Society he was well known for his love of, and passion for collecting mushrooms. He had given us a presentation on the taxonomy and systematics of the Basidiomycetes a while back. He also edited a newsletter for the L.I. Mycological Society.

A true renaissance man, Horst moved comfortably through several disciplines. An avid wildlife photographer, bibliophile, musician and canoeist, he was seldom inactive. Each Autumn he looked forward to the various October Fests he took part in where he played the baritone horn. He also played the bass violin, sang, and was master of ceremonies at social functions.

Horst migrated from Germany in 1954 where he held an apprenticeship with a druggist in Hamburg. After working a few years in the Toronto branch of the Elizabeth Arden Co., he left Canada and worked in one of their USA plants. When he left them in 1971 he was supervisor of their quality control department.

Horst received an A.S. from Nassau Community College in 1970, and quickly followed this with a B.S. and M.S. in Biology from C. W. Post. He became a Technical Assistant at Nassau Community in 1971, joined the teaching faculty as an instructor in 1975, and became a full professor in 1992. A member of the Allied Health Sciences department he taught Anatomy and Physiology. Horst also had taught a multi-disciplinary course combining Biological and Physical Science with Social Science and the Arts and Humanities.

His constant pursuit of knowledge and his hale and hearty outlook on life were characteristics of him which all of us will always recall. He will be missed by many, and our deepest sympathies are extended to his family.--**Vince Puglisi**

## *New Members*

**Ann Carter**, Miller Place; **Drs. Patrick & Rosemary Cooney**, Hastings-on-Hudson; **Angela Hayden**, East Islip; **David Heerwagen**, NYC; **Kevin Indoe**, Oyster Bay; **Helen McClure**, Locust Valley; **Tom Meoli**, Huntington; **Barbara Winsey**, NYC.

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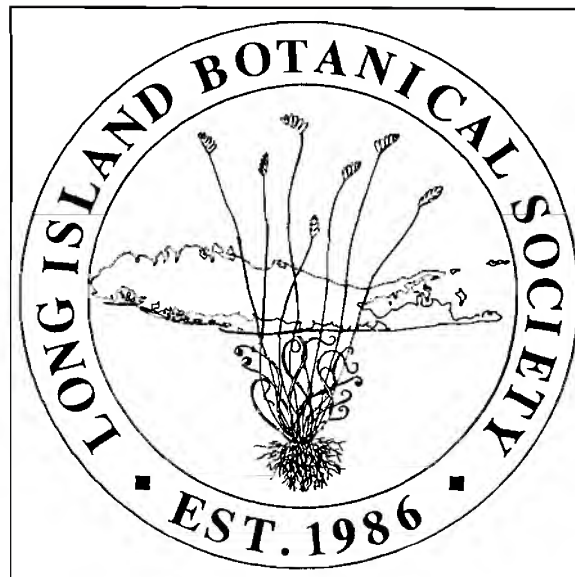
Founded: 1986; Incorporated: 1989.

The Long Island Botanical Society is dedicated to the promotion of field botany and a greater understanding of the plants that grow wild on Long Island, New York.

President	Eric Lamont . . . . .
Vice President	Steven Clemants . . . .
Treasurer	Carol Johnston . . . . .
Rec'd Sec'y	Barbara Conolly . . . .
Cor'sp Sec'y	Jane Blanchard . . . . .
Local Flora	Skip Blanchard . . . . .
Field Trip	Glenn Richard . . . . .
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	Betty Lotowycz . . . . .
Program	Eric Lamont . . . . .
Editor	Steven Clemants . . . .

### Membership

Membership is open to all, and we welcome new members. Annual dues are \$10. For membership, make your check payable to LONG ISLAND BOTANICAL SOCIETY and mail to: Lois Lindberg, Membership Chairperson, 45 Sandy Hill Rd., Oyster Bay, NY 11771-3111



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## LONG ISLAND BOTANICAL SOCIETY

c/o Muttontown Preserve  
Muttontown Lane  
East Norwich, NY 11732